



Lake Erie / Lake St. Clair Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee

Established by the Department of Natural Resources to improve and maintain the fishery resources of Lake Erie, Lake St. Clair, and the St. Clair and Detroit Rivers through better communication and partnership.

Lake Erie/ Lake St. Clair Citizen's Fish Advisory Committee Zoom Meeting

6/3/2020

Present: Jim Francis, Jim Felganauer, Mary Bohling, Katelyn Brolick, John Bacarella, Todd Wills, Randy Claramunt, Jerry Comfort, John Bauman, Donna Wesander, Frank Krist, Sara Thomas, Robert Burns, Henry Walters, Jerry Sickon, Jan-Michael Hessenauer, Paul Sacks, Eric Grajewski, Frank Lepera, Tim Muir, Dan Boileau, Dan Kimmel, Dave Shaw, Matt Hughes, Bob Neely, Andrew Briggs

<https://www.michiganseagrant.org/educational-programs/fisheries-workshops/>

<https://www.michiganseagrant.org/educational-programs/h-o-m-e-s-at-home/>

Notes:

Jim Felganauer, Chair - Welcome

- Jim Francis, DNR - Action Items
- Continuing discussion with Parks and Rec Division Action Items- Jim Felganauer
 - o Letter May 22nd received from Director Olson, copy attached to email invitations yesterday
 - o Improved boating access to the upper Detroit River
 - Open Milliken Harbor early this year- got held up in Gov. Executive order
 - Develop access site at Grey Haven Harbor
 - Pursuing a design - funding is a problem because of uncertainty in state budget
 - o Fish cleaning station for Lake St. Clair
 - Update on how to initiate the process
 - Work with Scott Pratt, Regional Operations Chief
 - Jim F (jfelganauer@gmail.com) would like to have a small group of people develop a work group to spear head this effort
 - o Harley Ensign BAS Improvements
 - In the works to be improved this year, combination of effects with water levels and budget put it on hold until 2021
 - o Improved ice angler access at Selfridge
 - Improve access
 - Ramp or steps for during the winter
 - o One of the issues raised in the Citizen Fishery Advisory Committee letter to Chief Olson was not addressed in his response. Bob Neely asked if there were any communications regarding the concerns raised regarding maintenance at Sterling State Park and Bolles Harbor. **Action Item: seek feedback from Parks regarding maintenance of Monroe access sites.**

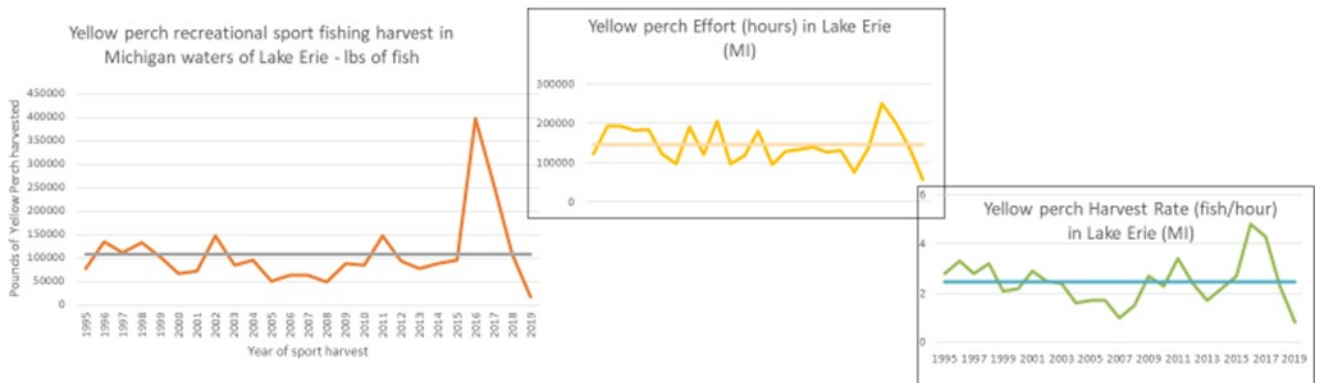
- **Sara Thomas, DNR – Lake Erie Committee annual meeting summary**

- Lake Erie yellow perch - 4 different management units
 - Lakewide harvest in 2019 commercial and sport- 4.5 million pounds total
 - Harvest was down everywhere besides eastern basin which increased
 - Sport harvest .240 million pounds lowest since 1975
 - Sport targeted effort (angler hours) low for MU's 1-3
 - 2019 Michigan anglers harvest just under 15,745 yellow perch
 - Harvest down 84%, effort down 58% and catch rate down 63% from 2018
 - Lowest rates in past 25 years

2019 Michigan YEP sport fishery numbers

	YEP harvest (#'s)	YEP harvest (lbs.)	TAC (lbs)	Targeted effort	Mean CPE
2019	48,595	15,745	221,000	57,929	0.84

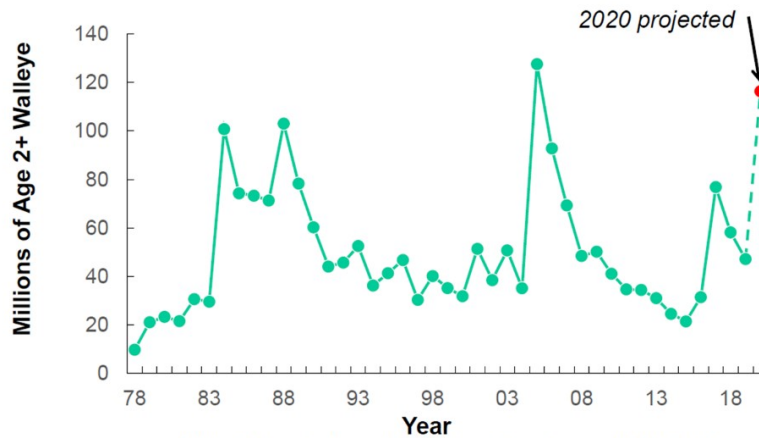
Lowest effort and harvest in 1988-present timeseries. Harvest down 84%, effort down 58% and catch rate down 63% from 2018. Only 7% of TAC was harvested.



- Ontario, Michigan, and Ohio showed excellent numbers of age 1 perch in last years surveys, so there should be high numbers entering the fishery in 2020 as 2-year olds
- Population model projects a 60% increase in yellow perch number in the west basin for 2020, relative to 2019
- Yellow perch harvest limit will remain 50 per day in Lake Erie
- Lake Erie Walleye - 5 different management units
 - Lot of young walleye in the system
 - 2019 year class strong (97th percentile), 2018 strong as well (100th percentile)
 - Based on the population model – abundance of age-2 and older walleye will increase from 47.1 million walleye in 2019 to 116.4 million walleye in 2020

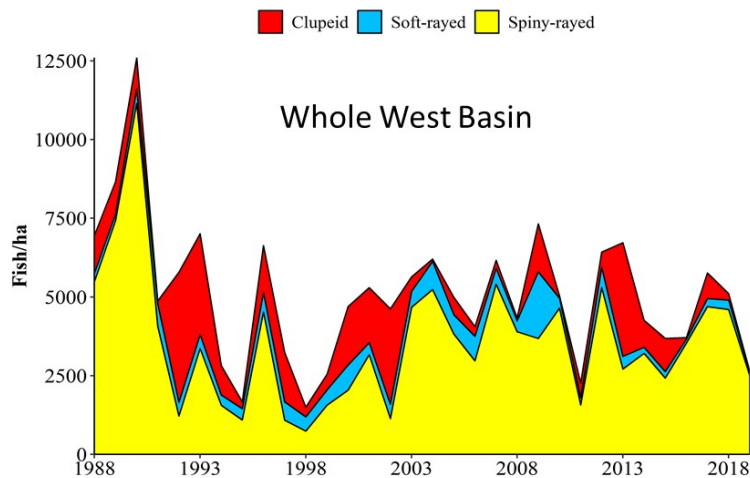


Lake Erie Walleye Abundance 1978-2019 2020 projected abundance



Note: Integrated model with Age-0 random walk; $M=0.32$

- 2019 walleye sport harvest in MI 153,000 (31% of quota)
- Sport fishery trajectory for walleye catch going up
- 80% of harvest was from 2015 year class
- Michigan's 2020 quota for walleye will increase 20% to 597,000 walleye
- Total bag limit for the St Clair-Detroit River System and Lake Erie is 6
- Forage Task Group - Consistent levels of forage, dominated by spiny-rayed fishes in West Basin Lake Erie.



- Lake Trout Rehabilitation Plan
 - Redoing plan that will expire in 2020, not a huge fishery over here in Western basin but larger in Eastern basin.
 - Abundance of older fish (age 5+) are increasing
- Habitat task group
 - Reel-time Aquatic Ecosystem Observation Network

- Program established to facilitate data collection and accessibility among different agencies
 - Equipment sharing that covers water quality, acoustic telemetry, and more
 - Collects data for hypoxia forecast model for Lake Erie
 - Able to provide water temperature and hypoxic upwelling reports
- **Each task group submits a written report that is available on www.glfc.org/annual-reports.php**
- **Jim Francis, DNR - Fisheries Division Update**
 - Impacts of COVID-19
 - Began canceling meetings in mid-March
 - All staff continue to work from home as of mid-March
 - About half of fisheries division staff laid off April 27-May 8
 - Most state workers now 4 day work week / 1 day laid off May 18-July 24
 - Egg-takes cancelled: steelhead(affect 2021 stocking), walleye (affect 2020 stockings), muskellunge(affect 2020 stockings)
 - Consolidated stocking sites this past spring to reduce the number of trips and potential exposure of staff
 - Locally - Belle River steelhead were stocked into Clinton River
 - Lake Assessments delayed - this week was first week anyone got back out in the field, but very limited
 - USFWS
 - Lake Trout Shore Stockings- a lot ended up being shore stockings (rather than barge offshore) and could not cover as large of an area due to travel limitations
 - Mass Marking did not happen (coded wire tag program)
 - Budget Implications
 - State of MI Budget = \$60 B
 - FY20 projections= \$2.6B deficit
 - FY21 projection= \$3.3B deficit
 - Fish Division
 - \$32M budget
 - Only \$0.4M comes from general fund, everything else is restricted funds such as license sales and Dingell-Johnson
 - License Sales
 - Through May 25, fishing license sales are up 12%
 - Age 17-44 showed most gains
 - Strong growth in new customers- those that have not bought a license in the last 5 years
 - Only category not showing growth - non-resident license, but that is not surprising given the travel restrictions this past spring
 - Regulations
 - NRC continues to meet, but last few were online
 - Director requested we reduce number of regulation changes going to NRC this year

- Given uncertainties and inability to meeting with the public
 - More time sensitive proposals going through
- Harmful Algal Blooms
 - 2020 projections look to be on the lower end relative to recent years
- Domestic Action Plan
 - Addressing HAB in Lake Erie
 - In the works to be revised, open for public comments through June 19th, 2020
 - Distributed via email as well as Bob Neely's comment
 - Needs timeline commitments, and lacks specific metrics
- **Todd Wills, DNR - COVID-19 Implications for survey work and fisheries management**
 - Annual SE MI Great Lakes surveys:
 - Lake Erie – creel, fall walleye gill net, August trawl survey
 - Lake St Clair – creel, spring and fall trawl, sturgeon trawl, Anchor Bay trap net, electrofishing
 - St Clair River – sturgeon set lines
 - Current situation – restrictions on Great Lakes field work activities
 - Approved for Phase 1 (5/26/2020) which included creel surveys, and vessel preparations
 - Return to work request for vessels which will be submitted today and work its way through the approval process hopefully soon
 - Gaps in surveys as a result of the no work
 - Very rare to have data gaps
 - Surveys lost April-May
 - LE/LSC creel
 - Walleye harvest come from that time of year
 - LSC trap net
 - LSC spring electrofishing
 - LSC spring trawl
 - SCR sturgeon unlikely
 - Cooperative lake-wide small fish survey unlikely in 2020
 - Ontario and USFWS have not gone out either
 - Have not yet received gear that was ordered a while ago
 - Management Implications
 - Surveys are the health check of the system
 - Relative abundance, growth, survival, tagging going to be all gaps
 - Partnership sample needs will not be met this year
 - Commercial fishery data and partner agencies will not be able to get fishery dependent information
 - Walleye models
 - Yellow perch models

- **Update – members**
 - Sturgeon in the classroom cancelled over the next year or two
 - Anticipate having sturgeon fishing tournament but no festival
- **Follow Up**
 - Eric Grajewski asked when we could expect the Clinton River Cut-off Boating Access Site to open?
 - Parks has recently begun dredging, but do not anticipate it being open until after July 4.

Below is a link to the annual status report produced by the Lake St Clair Fisheries Research Station

https://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/LSCFRSStatus2019_688145_7.pdf